

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Chairman Grijalva,

We write regarding the acceptance of the amendment filed by Rep. Bishop of Utah (#269) to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 in an en bloc package approved in the Armed Services Committee. This amendment would directly threaten over 840,000 acres of unique plant and animal habitats in Nevada's Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

The decision to allow this amendment to be included in this legislation, without consulting the members of Nevada's Congressional Delegation, is particularly concerning. The effort to block the Department of Interior from continuing its over 90-year protection and management of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge has occurred with little to no discussion with affected stakeholders. Our colleagues in the Senate Armed Services Committee clearly outlined these concerns in the Committee Report accompanying S. 4049 (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021):

“...the committee is disappointed by the lack of engagement conducted to date by the Air Force and the failure to coordinate with all relevant stakeholders, including other committees of jurisdiction, the Nevada delegation, tribes, hunters, and conservationists. As such, the committee directs the Air Force to reengage and develop a new compromise approach that balances military training needs with that of all relevant parties.”

Yet, the Bishop Amendment dictates the terms of a new memorandum of understanding that provides the Air Force with nearly limitless authority to adjudicate any disputes and relegates the Department of the Interior to merely a consultative role.

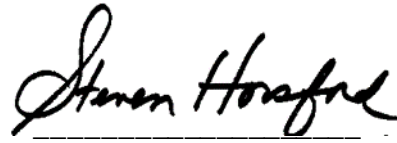
In 1936, more than a decade before the establishment of the United States Air Force, these lands were set aside for the protection of the unique flora and fauna of the region, including the iconic Big Horn Sheep. Should this anti-conservationist amendment become law, in effect hundreds of thousands of acres of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge would no longer be a refuge at all.

If this matter is not addressed prior to the legislation coming to the House floor, we will file an amendment to strike these provisions. We ask for your support in the Committee on Rules to ensure this amendment is made in order. This would allow the duly elected representatives from the impacted state an opportunity to have a voice in this conversation as well as permit more time for the Air Force to appropriately engage with affected stakeholders. We thank you for your attention to this important issue and look forward to working with you to address my concerns.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Steven A. Horsford
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress

Cc: Speaker Pelosi
Leader Hoyer
Chairman McGovern